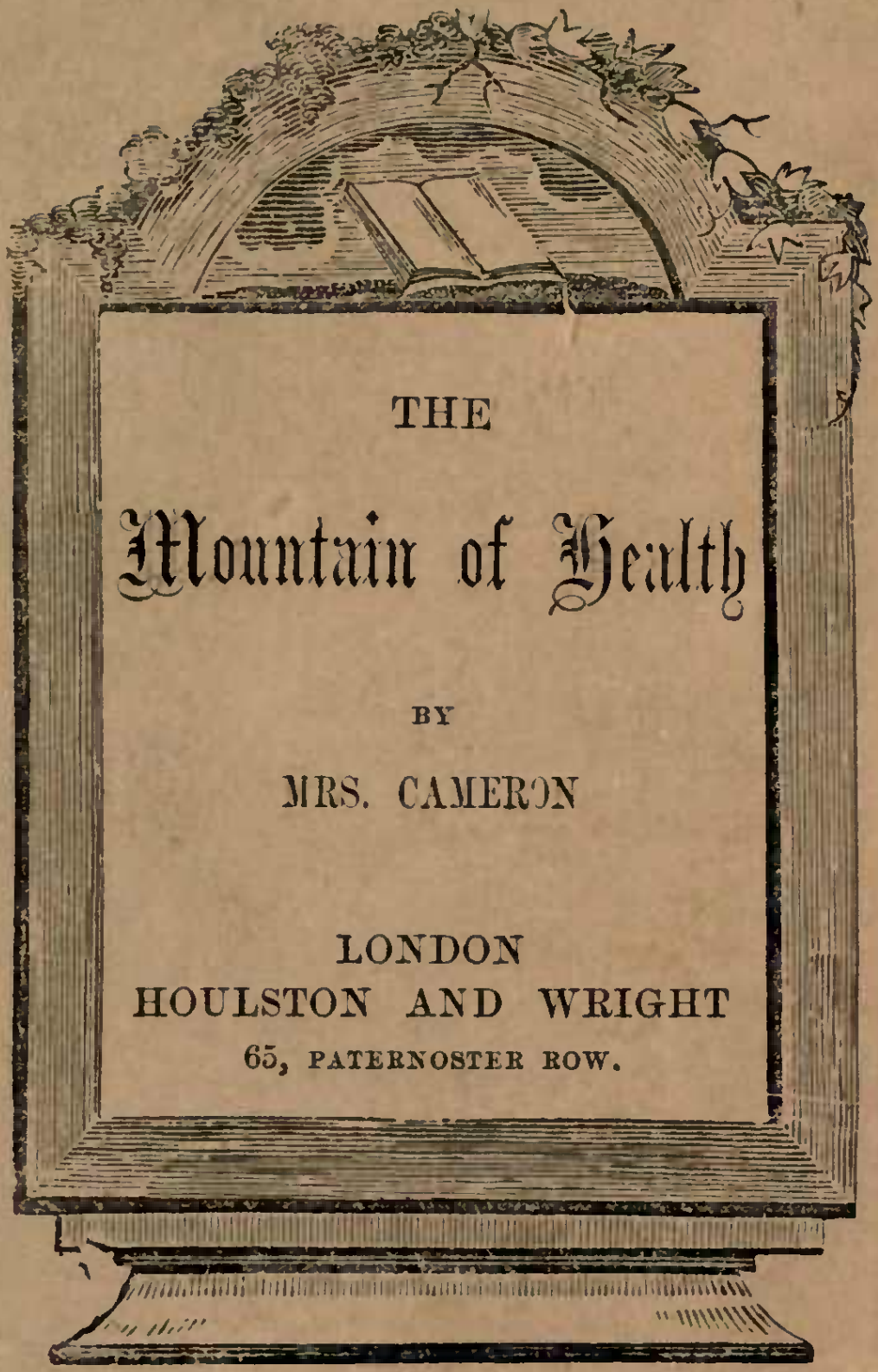

THE Mountain of Health

BY

MRS. CAMERON

LONDON
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65, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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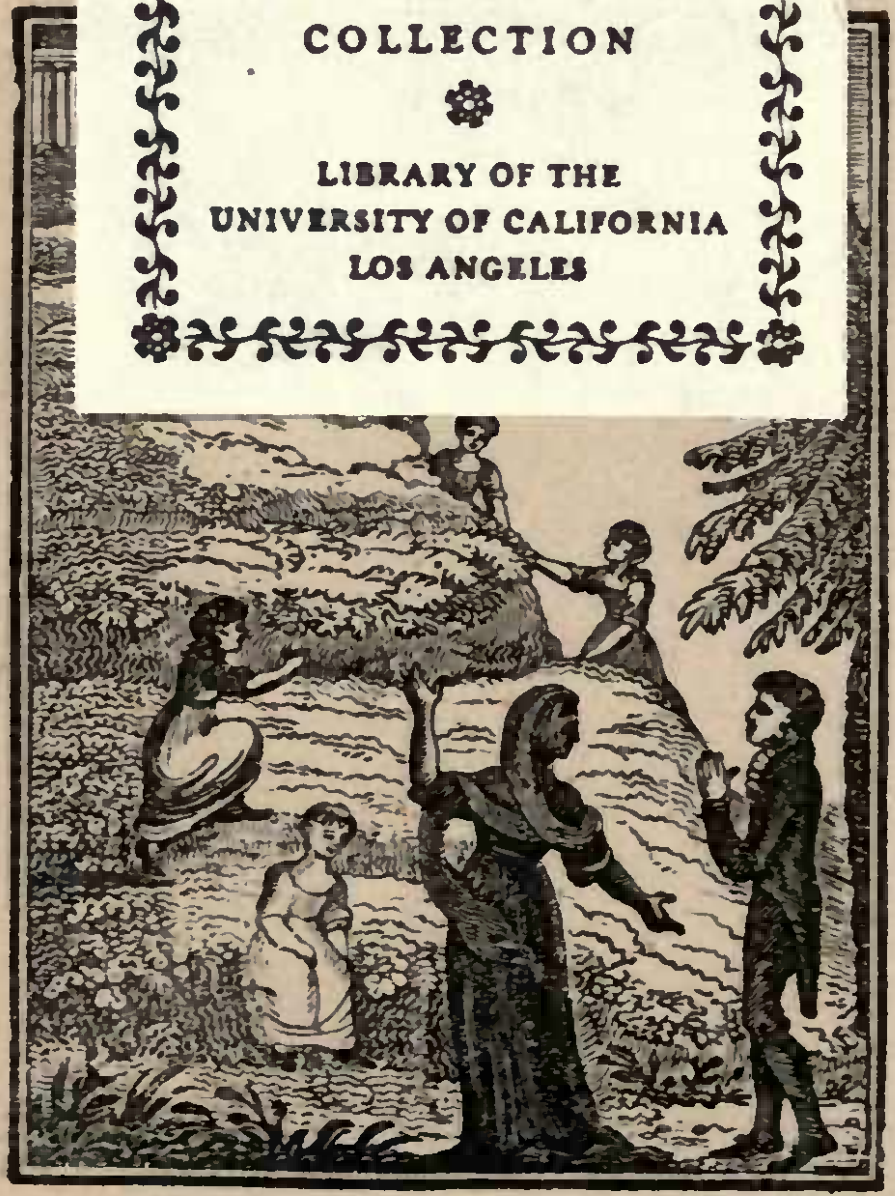


"Presently the greater part of them turned back, as if quite wearied: a few ascended the hill a little way."—p. 11.

THE

MOUNTAIN OF HEALTH

OR

THE HOUR IMPROVED

BY MRS. CAMERON

AUTHOR OF

MARGARET WHYTE, THE TWO LAMBS, ETC.

NEW EDITION

LONDON

HOULSTON AND WRIGHT

65, PATERNOSTER ROW

THE

Mountain of Health.

THERE lived once a certain gentleman and lady, who had one little child with whom they took great pains to make her very good and very wise. But

their attempts were all in vain; the little child was neither good nor clever; so that they began to be very unhappy, and were quite at a loss what plan to follow with her: when, after spending some time in useless grief, they heard of a schoolmistress, who lived many miles distant from them, who had the repute of never dismissing any child from her school, till she had rendered her really wise, and really amiable.

Immediately upon hearing of this person, the father determined to set out in search of her, in order to consult with her upon the means proper to be used with his own child.

After travelling many miles, he arrived at length at her house, which was situated in a delicate green plain, beautifully sprinkled over with forest trees of luxuriant foliage, and underwood of flowering shrubs refreshed and watered by a brook tumbling from

a hill of the most inviting appearance which rose behind the house.

When the gentleman, whose name we shall call Philalethes, introduced himself to the schoolmistress, and informed her of his errand, she received him with the utmost courtesy, and having listened to all he had to say, she replied, that she hoped he would remain several days in her family, and that when he had made his observa-

tions upon her scholars and her methods of instructing them, she would willingly give him any further information which he should desire.

Philalethes obtained permission the next day, to be present while the children received their lessons. The appearance of the children was various. Some were pale and languid, and applied themselves to their studies with so much listlessness, that there seem-

ed to be little likelihood of their making any progress in them; these reminded him of his own little girl. Others had more appearance of health and activity. But the only child among them who seemed to give her whole mind to her lessons, was a little blooming sparkling girl called Sophia: whether she read, or wrote, or embroidered, or played on the lute, she was still good-humoured, still diligent, still pleased; and when her lessons were over it was the same thing, in every game Sophia was foremost; she was hid among the bushes and reappeared, was hid again and reappeared almost as swiftly as the birds who inhabited the trees, and her companions vainly endeavoured to catch her. Yet she was willing to play at whatever pleased them, and was still amiable and pleasant.

At the close of the day, Philalethes

enquired of the governess why the little Sophia so much excelled all her companions?

"She has been much longer under my care," answered the governess, "than any of her companions. I hope soon to see them all using the same means which make her so excellent."

"And what are those means?" asked Philalethes.

"If you will consent to rise to-morrow morning at the time that we do," said the governess, "you may become acquainted with them."

Philalethes begged that he might be called by break of day, and then went to rest.

The next morning Philalethes was roused very early, and made haste to go down stairs.

A garden behind the house faced the little hill which wore so sweet a

form, and upon the top of which the golden tints of the dawn rested ere they shone into the valley.

In this garden the governess and her scholars were assembled, and she was pointing with her hand to the summit of the hill; and, as Philalethes drew towards them, he heard her exhorting the children, in sweet accents, to ascend it, and at the same time she gave into the hands of each, a small silver vessel.

At her bidding they all set out, but Sophia was foremost, and Philalethes followed at some little distance, to see what the children would do: but presently the greater part of them turned back, as if quite wearied; a few ascended the hill a little way; one very young creature, whom Sophia held by the hand, went half way up the hill and then drew her hand away saying, she would go a little higher

the next day; but of all the children, none reached the summit except Sophia, and just as she reached it, the sun rose in full glory before her, shedding a heavenly brilliancy upon a far distant land, the beauty of which was faintly seen from the hill. "O, pleasant land!" exclaimed the child, forgetting the many weary steps she had trod, "O, sweet and beloved home, where my father lives, and a mansion is preparing for me! when shall I see you face to face, when shall I behold you in all your beauty?"

Then the little one sat down, and sung a hymn in a voice so sweet, that Philalethes could have listened to it all day. Of this hymn he recollected only two lines:—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me."

The little girl soon afterwards rose

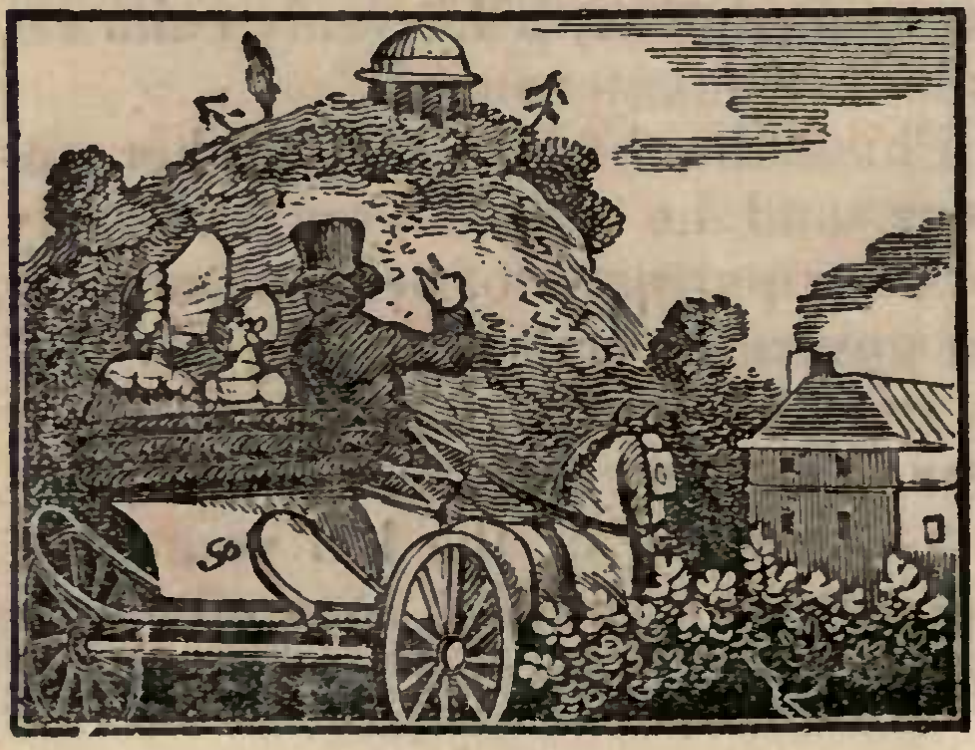
up, and employed herself in gathering and eating certain fruit which grew over a pure spring of water, and then she knelt down and filled her silver vessel more than once with water from the spring, after which she seemed quite refreshed: then gathering a few sweet flowers which grew luxuriantly on the hill by the water side, and putting them in her bosom, she descended the hill with cheerful steps. And when she appeared again among her companions, a heavenly calm sat upon her countenance.

Philalethes had watched all her motions, and he waited very anxiously for an opportunity of being alone with the governess, and of asking her many questions respecting what he had seen in the morning.

"The name of the hill your little favourite ascended," answered the governess, "is Early Piety. Certain

extraordinary privileges belong to those children who climb it every day. On this account I have built my house at its foot, and I have never found any of my scholars become really wise, till they have learned, like Sophia, daily to visit it."

Philalethes needed no more information; he thanked the governess for all her kindness, and immediately set off home: and the parents, in a short



time, brought their little girl with them, and procured a suitable abode at the foot of the hill; and they rested not, till the child had learned daily to ascend it, and became, like Sophia, active, blooming, amiable, and wise.

L.

FINIS.

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